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## REVIEWS OF NEW WORKS.

*On the Mortality of Master Mariners.* By F. G. P. NEISON, Esq.

[Read before the Statistical Society of London, 18th June, 1849.]

THE inquiries of Mr. Neison have tended to throw light upon so many obscure topics connected with the assurance of life and health, that we willingly draw attention to one of these original investigations, hoping, in future Numbers, to notice other subjects to which his labours have been so honourably and usefully applied. Though a little reversing the order of his observations, we must begin by cordially expressing our assent to his remarks on the small aid which has been furnished in the collection of original facts by the number of wealthy and flourishing companies, possessing ample means not only of aiding individual researches, but of contributing data of the most important and genuine character. We firmly believe, that not only the public, but the Companies also, gain by the knowledge of the laws which regulate any class of contingencies. There can scarcely be a more striking proof of this fact than the immense impetus which has been given in this country to the assurance of life, by the subject having been inquired into and the laws investigated by men of science and competent experience; nor, on the other hand, of the distress and failures which occur for want of such data, than the deplorable condition in which the large mass of Benefit Clubs, designed for provision against sickness and infirmity, are at this moment placed. The actual experience of Life Assurance Companies is even yet scarcely known. Only two Societies, the Equitable and the Amicable, have given the results to their members in a form which is available for scientific inquiries; for the "Experience of Seventeen Life Assurance Companies" must be considered deficient in several important particulars, especially in the short duration of observation amongst the members. How little encouragement has been given to researches which would tend to the general benefit of all, as, for instance, the collection of data from various quarters, of the Statistics of Disease, and risks of residence in Foreign Climates! Mr. Neison observes,—

"It is notorious, that notwithstanding many Societies have at command a greater capital than some of the governments of Europe, there is not a single public document extant throwing light on the state and condition of any other class in the community than their own members, published at the expense of those Societies. Of the very meagre quantity of information which does exist, all has been derived from other sources; and there is no wonder, therefore, that in these wealthy corporations there should exist the anomalous feature, unknown to other matters of enterprise and industry, of the practice being much in advance of the science on which it should be founded; in fact, after the most diligent inquiries, a single instance has not been found of any one of these great and powerful companies, which boast of their millions of invested capital, having spent £500 in the original investigation of any single branch or department of Vital Statistics."

It may be probably objected to Mr. Neison's censure, that the capitals of these companies belongs to others, and that the managers cannot use them merely for the advancement of knowledge in general. The

funds of these companies are no doubt held in trust for specified purposes ; but if the subject of inquiry be one in which the interests of the members, as an associated body, are concerned, it may not be unreasonable to expect that a portion of them may be devoted to scientific inquiries by which the risks may be more accurately ascertained and the true premiums be more closely computed. We shall probably have occasion to renew this subject in our next Number, in reference to a scientific Society recently formed amongst the Medical Profession, for investigations in which Life Assurance Companies are largely concerned, and now proceed to a few remarks on Mr. Neison's paper.

The materials for his article have been collected from the records of the " Master Mariners' Society," enrolled under the Friendly Societies' Acts, and they include the experience of the Society for fourteen years, from 1835 to 1848. The members consist exclusively of master mariners, and, previous to admission, they are subject to the same scrutiny as to health and habits as is customary on entering a Life Assurance Society. In addition to the usual experience of friendly societies, the benefits granted allow of some curious investigations peculiar to the class, sums of money being not only paid on the deaths of members, but in case of the wreck or partial wreck of their vessels. By re-classifying the facts in different forms, Mr. Neison shows, in Table I., that out of 270 deaths, which occurred amongst the total number of 11,146 persons, exposed to the risk of mortality, 165 deaths only have taken place from natural causes, 62 were lost with their vessels, 7 took place by violent means (such as falling of masts and loss of life in engagements with pirates), 23 were drowned, 12 washed overboard, and 1 hung himself. From other abstracts, it appears, that while from all causes 270 deaths happened in the Master Mariners' Society, the corresponding members, according to the rate of mortality in England and Wales, as given in Mr. Neison's 'Contributions to Vital Statistics,' would be 145, being an increase of mortality of upwards of 86 per cent., or 90 per cent. if the ages 21 to 60 only be taken. Again, considering only the deaths by natural causes in this class, 165 occurred instead of 144, according to the rate of mortality in England and Wales ; being an excess of  $14\frac{1}{2}$  per cent., or 18 per cent., between the ages 21 and 60 inclusive.

A singular abstract is also given, showing the number of wrecks, total and partial, which occurred to members of the Society at different ages, descending gradually from 3.95 per cent. between the ages 21-25 to 1.342 per cent. between ages 61-65, with the exception of the ages 51-55, at which the proportion of wrecks is the highest of all, viz. 4.114 per cent. Mr. Neison remarks,—

" It will thus be seen, that at the younger ages the wrecks and losses of property, under the charge of master mariners, is greater than at the more advanced ages ; and these facts, viewed in connection with the circumstance already alluded to, that the loss of life from accidental and extraordinary events is also more frequent at younger ages, strengthen the presumption that increased years and experience among the captains of merchant vessels give greater security to both life and property under their charge."

Mr. Neison has taken the trouble to compute, and had the liberality to publish D and N columns at 3 per cent. interest, deduced from a

corrected table of results, so that the actuary may have at his command the means of calculating with great facility all the money values for annuities and assurances in this class of occupation. An interesting comparison is also made between the mortality amongst master mariners and that deduced from the returns of mariners' friendly societies generally throughout the kingdom, embracing a humbler class of seafaring men than the former. The deaths out of 32,509 exposed to risk are given as 830, and the proportion per cent. is 2.55, as compared with 2.43 by the former table, showing a slight difference in favour of the master mariners.

However much the subject of Statistics may be derided by a few writers, who prefer a more flighty and less plodding way to knowledge, there can be little doubt that it is only by the collection of actual facts that the community will ever derive permanent safety or advantage in the application of the doctrines of probability. Brilliant speculations may give their authors temporary fame, and dazzle the public eye with their useless splendour, but the real good of the humbler classes of society is more effectually consulted by these quiet endeavours to search for facts, by which the institutions founded for their benefit may be set on a firmer basis and be more deserving of success. We think this paper reflects credit on the author, both for its practical utility and the public spirit with which it is written.

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*General Average and the Losses and Expenses resulting from General Average Acts, practically considered.* By LAURENCE R. BAILY.  
London: Baily Brothers, 1851, pp. 124.

THE etymon of the mercantile word *Average* has been planted from language to language till it is reduced to a Scythian word meaning *spring grass*. The newer and simpler derivation is, however, from the Latin verb *averare*, to carry or bear; and *average*, or more properly *general average*, signifies, in commerce, that *bearing* of certain losses among many, which were incurred for the general benefit of that many. In other words, it relates to the contribution between the shipowners and the proprietors of cargo in a marine adventure, to make good some loss sustained or some expenses incurred by one or more of the associated parties for the salvation or the benefit of the whole of the interests at stake.

The arrangement of settlements of this kind,—and they are susceptible of great variations and considerable intricacy,—forms a branch of distributive justice, and gives rise to a distinct mercantile profession. The writer of the present small volume belongs to this profession, and is therefore entitled to attempt to reduce in categorical form the various heads of the subject; and he produces a hand-book for the use of those whose misfortune may lead them to study a system which has its life and origin in *loss*. Larger and more learned works have indeed preceded Mr. Baily's, which in a considerable degree must be looked upon as a repetition of or a selection from them. Park, Abbott, Hughes, Arnould, Stevens, and others, have devoted treatises in part or in whole to *Average*. Mr. Baily takes up one division of the subject only, and he treats of it in a series of propositions, with occasional discussions and